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Interview with Father Snoke and Jerry Freewalt

Amanda Feld

Christina Engler

Father Snoke

Jerry Freewalt

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Amanda Feld and Christina Engler
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Fieldwork: The Family Farm

Farm Organizations and Community Life: St. Luke's Catholic Church

The following is a transcription of an interview with Father Snoke and Jerry Freewalt. The interview took place at St. Luke's in Danville on February 20th at 3:15 p.m. Father Snoke was referred to the Farm Project by Reverend Lavelle of the Saint Vincent de Paul Catholic Church in Mount Vernon. That interview took place on October 24, 1995 by Alisoun Davis and should be referred to for more information about the role of the Catholic Church in Knox County. Father Snoke can be reached at St. Luke's at (614) 599-6362. Jerry Freewalt of the Catholic Diocese of Columbus can be reached through the Department of Social Concerns, 197 E. Gay Street; Columbus, Ohio 43212. His phone number is (614) 241-2540 and his e-mail address is: "freewalt@freenet.columbus.oh.us"

AF: -February 20th and we're here with Father Snoke and Jeffrey Freewalt

JF: Jerry

AF: Jerry- I'm sorry, Jerry Freewalt and we're meeting at St. Luke's in Danville and this is Christina Engler and Amanda Feld. okay, let me put this toward you guys [microphone] So basically our concern and our interest is just to learn as much as we can about your organization and what you guys do in the community whether it be in Danville alone or just in Knox County in general. We're basically focusing on the county so we're- we've learned about 4-H and FFA and like the role of the Grange and that sort of thing- and we don't know very much about churches in general and what they do- like with everybody and how that affects what's going on. So, if you could just give us a general idea and then specifically what you guys feel is so important- and that sort of thing

FS: okay-well, you know I go way back in 4- You mentioned 4-H and I was a 4-H member from the time I was about 11 years old till I got into the seminary. I was Lancaster, Ohio Fairfield Friendly Farmers. Friendly Farmers we were called and I was involved in leadership and 4-H and showed hogs and chickens and all kinds of things. So, it's right down my ally you know, that you're in a

AF: uh-huh

FS: 4-H thing. And then I was in Junior Leadership, Junior Advisor and all that. And so that's why I think when I'm here as pastor- I've been here for 8- I mean, on my 9th year. And I have a pretty good background for the farm community for because my grandfather owned over a 300 acre farm and he used to raise about a 1000 turkeys- many of 'em were hatched in the basement in incubators of the farm house. He always had a couple dozen head of hogs, brood sows.

He had- raised his own turkey hens and produced his own eggs and hatched a lot of his- all except when he got too many and then he'd have to take 'em to the hatchery. And grandma always had 8 or 10 milk cows and and she took care of that business. Grandpa likes a couple hundred laying hens and then other things. He always raised truck patches which was like melons and corn beans and all kinds of vegetables and always something was being sold. So, when I come here- but when you come in this community here, today farming is much different. It's a- it's more specialized. At a- there's several- instead of raising 20 sows, they may have 200 or 300 or- instead of having 8 or 9 cows, they may be all dairy. And they may have 50, 60, 80 you know, a lot more milk cows than what we were used to. We were like general farming, cash farming- you know, you'll have what you call cash farming with your grain and you know, the animals ate the grain and the stuff you made and then the other stuff we sold right there in the front yard out- three miles out of Lancaster. And today- I have 5 or 6 gardens every summer, bigger than this room each one of 'em where I raise everything under the sun

ALL: [laugh]

FS: I raise [inaudible]... and cauliflower and collards and rutabaga and sweet potatoes and all kinds of stuff. I raise all the- a lot of stuff they raise here, too- tomatoes; I've got-had white tomatoes this summer, red tomatoes, black tomatoes

AF: oh really? What are white and black tomatoes?

FS: well, they're that color.

AF: [laugh]

FS: I just- I always look for something new and different

AF: do they taste similar?

FS: they tasted okay, but there's nothing like the good 'ol red tomatoes

AF: yeah [laugh]

ALL: [laugh]

FS: so, I feel right at home with, with the people here at St. Luke's. We have a variety of farms here. We have a couple hog farmers- the Blanchard's have a good size farm, there's three brothers

AF: I think somebody from our class just visited them this last week

FS: okay, and it's quite a trip. And then their brother-in-law Charlie Brackton has a

hog farm but, he's smaller- he's only one farm family. And his wife Linda teaches over here in the school know that here kids are all in school. And, I think this is something too- a lot of farm families the wife, they'll need her help on the farm or they have another job to help sometimes, so...- but especially with the small farm. We have some dairy farms in the parish. We have one farmer that raises several thousand turkeys several times a year, Don

AF: Is that Hawk-

FS: Don Hawk

AF: yeah, we visited them also

FS: and, I usually bring the people from [inaudible] office- I take them all over touring like you have done. And he has sheep there, too. I don't- you saw his sheep

AF: uh-huh

FS: and he also raises corn. And the wife also has the

AF: Janet

FS: hydroponic

FS: [both] tomatoes

AF:

FS: so you've been to all the places that I know

ALL: [laugh]

AF: well, not all of 'em at all. But I just, we- each person in the class paired up with somebody first semester and we went and visited a family farm and I went to the Hawks. So, I got to visit them a lot. I was hoping that maybe that you knew them.

FS: yeah, they're members here. They're very active in the parish and involved and Don's on the Renovation Committee- we're getting ready to renew our church and Janet's been very much a part of the parish Council of Catholic Women and the kids have really been- well, Shanon and Joey are involved in the Youth-Youth Group and Shanon has been to CLC, the Catholic Leadership in Columbus and she just recently helped with the retreat to facilitate and you know, so they're quite involved. And- you can ask me any questions; I could just go on and on and I don't know

AF: oh, no- you're right on target

FS: exactly what you want. But, I always loved to have people come in and take 'em out to around St. Luke's parish because we've got eight or ten different zip codes and- or any different exchanges and I've got some parishioners that live way up in the Butler area and they're scattered all over the place. I've got Dick Rieman- I don't- he has cows but he's a little dairy farmer way up in another diocese. I've got parishioners that probably live over in the Toledo diocese and

AF: oh, wow

FS: and also in the St- also in the Cleveland diocese because they live pretty close to Loudonville, you know. But they still belong here because they've got family roots- lot of people, if they're baptized as little and they live around here anywhere they still come back to St. Luke's and probably the same thing for St. Vincent's

AF: where's that?

FS: that's in the center of Mount Vernon. Father Lavelle, you talked to Father Lavelle

AF: oh- that's right, yeah

telephone interruption

FS: We're putting on a Journey One- Journey Two this Saturday. It's a youth retreat on sexuality awareness and Christian, Christ awareness and it's for ninth and tenth graders. And I've got teenagers from different part of the diocese as my facilitators and I've got one of my young ladies that's in college now that's gonna" be my girls' director and I've got a seminar coming in to be the boys' director. And they are gonna" co-direct this retreat and it's gonna" be 1 o'clock Saturday at' 1 o'clock Sunday and they're stay here in this building overnight. Girls and boys- and we keep boys on one end and girls the other

ALL: [laugh]

AF: I was going to say- sexual awareness and you're all together...

FS: We don't need to make 'em any more aware!

ALL: [laugh]

FS: They're already aware. This last weekend I had 51 people in here. I had state squires; I had 'em from Van Wert and [inaudible]... and Coldwater and St. Clairsville and New Lexington and- where else was they from?

JF: St. Clairsville- did you say that

FS: in St. Luke's here, we had 'em from several different places and they're about 35 boys including my leadership bunch and some of the past state officers came back and then- several men that were the counselors and we fed 51 at one time

AF: oh, wow

FS: we had a special Lent retreat right here in this building. It was rockin'

ALL: [laugh]

FS: and then, a neat thing we had here you know- this is gonna" be all scattered, you may have to-

AF: that's fine

FS: neat thing we had here Sunday night, we have a parish mardi gras. And it's family oriented and so Sunday night after the squires went home at 5 o'clock we had a pot luck dinner and you won't find a better pot luck dinner anywhere around then here at St. Luke's. [laughs] Every church will tell you that

AF: yummm...

FS: but we had a pot luck dinner and we had over a hundred people came. And they brought their families, their little kids and we started out with pinatas- you know, one of the ladies made these and we had- what'd she make- three different ones and they were filled with candy and then the different ages got to get up and crack it and the candy fell down and they all ran for it- we had that Sunday night

AF: oh-

FS: then we had a good 'ol fashioned square dance and cake walk and that kind of thing. We had games in the back room. And some of these were farm- they were families in the community. We sent special invitations to our new families that just had moved in the last couple of years. We had a nice crowd. But the nice thing about it were that the little kids were just running around and having fun and the parents were having fun 'cause they were out square dancing. We had the older kids sorta with movies and games and candy walk in the back room here all going on while this was all happening

AF: oh, that's great

FS: so that was, that was fun.

AF: Since you have so many farm families as members, do you find yourself extending outward into the community when farm problems happen? Like if

somebody can't harvest something or- like is there a sort of support there or-

FS: We haven't had a whole lot of, of things like that in the nine years I've been here- it's been pretty good times. I know that a few years back we had a drought and everybody kinda' buckled down and kinda' helped and one person put in a order to water pump to get the water oughtta' the crick and- but, everybody were able to buckle-up and you know, were able to make it and I know, in the area- I know there's some farmers, not so many mine- but I know they're a couple in the area that were having difficulty because their corn crop was not going to be good and as a result they were going to have to get-buy for the feed and as a result they were not going to get to stay in business and that sometimes scares ya' but you'll find that most farmers- at least the ones around here and many places will plan far enough ahead and they know there are gonna' be good times and bad times

AF: yeah

FS: and so, when you have the good times you just don't squander it till it [inaudible]

AF: [laughs]

FS: but you kinda make arran- save and put things back and so when you have the drought or the lean years, you, you'll survive

AF: right

FS: because you're always just like my garden out there- I have all these gardens. I do it for exercise and I give away to needy and different things but the whole thing is- I wouldn't need all those gardens if I just had more time to just spend to one but then if one plot fails, then I've got something over here. Like my early potato crop didn't do so well, but the ones I planted late under the straw were marvelous [laugh]

AF: [laugh]

FS: because the rain came at the right time and the bugs were gone and it just worked out well. So, the farming's almost- you gotta,' you gotta' plan well and if one thing goes wrong you have another. That's why grampaw was so successful is because he had general farming and when he didn't make much from one, he always had something else to pull him through. He either had stewing hens sold out in the yard or- one year the whole orchard was filled with ducks; he got a good buy on his little ducklings and put 'em out in the orchard and fed 'em and then

AF: [laughs]

FS: sold 'em off to, to a, you know, slaughter house and you know when one thing

doesn't work, another thing does. When you specialize more it's a little more difficult. But they make it here. I think a thing, too- on the farm, the family works together. I think that's, that's a neat thing you notice. They work together not only at home on the farm but they also work together in the community and in the church.

CE: wow

FS: our community here is made up of a variety of people, some farmers and many not, but I know that when I first came here, there was two or three times one of our parishioners got a sickness and we took up a second collection and I was able to take \$5000 check to the hospital and hand it to 'em.

AF: oh, wow

FS: and another time we had a non-Catholic family that one of our parishioners thought we oughtta' help and I took up \$1800 in a second collection. And I don't remember- we haven't had to do that- you were talking about 'do they get together' well,

AF: right

FS: that's how we got together.

AF: wow

FS: we have a neat thing happening over here now. We, the area ministers, [inaudible] Danville ministers have been brainstorming for about four or five years- for most of my years here and we wanted to establish some kind of a health center or take care of people, so we started the Sanctuary Community Action Incorporated. And we bought the old Church of Christ; we're still paying on it, but we bought it across the street here and now we are housing the satellite inner church which has a, which has a clothing- i can't- what's the name of that, the mouse something?

JF: the Churchmouse

FS: the Churchmouse- and it's a thrift store. In fact, anybody can come, kids from Kenyon or anybody. I told 'em you ought to have 'ol ragged jeans over there because they [laugh]ALL: [laugh]

FS: they would go good with the kids. And you know- but anyway, they got some nice things over there and anyone can go in there and shop so if you ever want to go over there and shop.

AF: yeah, that'd be neat

FS: it's usually 10 to 2 or something like that during the week and the first Saturday a month it's open from about 10 to 2, over here- right across the street. And then, people come in for groceries, people come in all the time over there and then also, we help with bills and different things and the satellite inner church has a, one of the parishioners happens to be the director and then we have a house manager and there's another person, the heart over there. And then the Sanctuary Community Action part, we- it's the umbrella in which all this fits but we have, I was showing Jerry this morning- I took him over there where we have Wick in there once a month and we have freedom centers doing parenting classes. We have a humane- human services coming in and we, we're trying to get mid-wives service over there but we're running into well, just getting the community used to it and some of the doctors and so we think that's gonna' happen. We're having blood pressures taken once a month by [inaudible] Knox County. We're having counseling from the Moundbuilders- it's happening right here in Danville, not- and this, this is because of the people that

AF: what is the Moundbuilders?

FS: Moundbuilders- where is it or what is it?

AF: what is it? I was just-

FS: Moundbuilders is the Knox County counseling department th-

AF: I've heard it a lot, I just wasn't sure

FS: and then they also have the, I think they have the mentally retarded or [inaudible] counseling services, you know- over out- oh, where is it?- it's out I've been there- out east or southeast or maybe, I'm not sure. But I know I've been there for a meeting I had for pastors. Some, some sort of-

interruption- coffee brought for Christina and tea for Father Snoke

FS: [to the secretary] What all does Moundbuilders do? They do the counseling

SEC: counseling

FS: do they do the mentally retarded too, or do they

CE: i had the coffee

FS: I think I had the tea and [points to Amanda] she had nothing and Jerry had nothing

ALL: [laugh]

FS: that's there own choice. She changed her

SEC: I'm gonna' have a tea myself

FS: do you want anything [motions to Jerry and Amanda]

JF: I'm fine thanks

CE: thank you

AF: thank you

SEC: let me get you the county book and it explains things

FS: okay. We'll get that for you

AF: great, thanks. yeah- I've heard that name mentioned a lot, I just didn't know

FS: yeah

AF: exactly what it did

FS: but anyway, I got off on a tangent here a little bit, but I think this kind of thing that's happening over here right now with everybody- and a lot of my parishioners, which older persons and younger persons you see over there volunteering. You see them over there sorting clothes, sorting food- Catholic and non-Catholic. Here every year we have-

SEC: there's a nice explanation in here under the coordinator's job [hands pamphlet to Father Snoke]

AF: thanks

CE: thank you

FS: developmental center- that's not it there. Moundbuilders Guidance Center then-

SEC: did I put- did I have Moundbuild-

FS: yeah, I got- yeah, I got it up here- Moundbuilders Guidance Center. Moundbuilders Guidance Center it's a comprehensive community mental health server- serving Knox and Licking counties; agencies services including [inaudible] family relationships, group counseling, adult and child case management service, psychiatric assessment, medication services, psychological testing, pre-hospitalization services, home based friendly therapy, special forensic services, consultation/education services, school based programming, 24 hour emergency service (open weekdays and evenings, all ages- sliding scale)- that's what they are. Developmental Center is for the retarded. Moundbuilders is what I just read up there- so there are the

two of those

AF: thank you

FS: okay, anyway, where were we Jerry? Where was I- We were talking about

AF: everybody working together

ALL: everybody working together, yeah

FS: all- for several years now, St. Luke's community center has- we give away- we have a Christmas basket project and this is the whole parish- farmers and everybody- retired, everybody. We have a Christmas tree, a giving tree over in church and we have a little ornament, a paper ornament on it that says 'a gift for child 8' of 'gift for child boy' or 'girl' or something and then the people buy a nice gift and place it under the tree and we bring it over. And it gives it well- when I first came, it- basically we were, basically St. Luke's was doing it, but know the whole community- we got churches and fire departments and legion and everybody's joining in- this last year the satellite inner church took care of the, well- the organization and we took care of- my team took care of packing and putting it together and it made- it's gonna' change a little bit because of organization a little bit, but it's a beautiful project at Christmas time. We get the schools that collect food and one year they collected 13, \$1400 in pennies- East Knox did. East Knox you, believe it- East Knox and Danville coming together to do something that they do-

AF: [laugh]

FS: ...football field or basketball

JF: oh

FS: but if those kinda things, I think kinda reflect the community in which we live.

AF: right

FS: you know, you know- it's all the people, not just the farmers

AF: especially that it transcends, you know what you were saying- if you're a Catholic or not; but both-

FS: yeah. And since we've got this building over here you know, it's sort of everybody's special. And we don't know what's gonna' happen with welfare all that and so I think we got started in the nick of time.

CE: yeah

JF: uh-huh

FS: you know because we've got a- And we took care for a while of the Methodist church and then, for several- two, three years we took care of all that out of here, but now since we've got an identity over there and got a place over there, where people are coming out of the woodworks we didn't even know- we knew we had but they didn't- they weren't identifiable. And so we're getting more and more people there that have real needs. And so, things- things are really happening

AF: oh, that's great

FS: this is for the whole eastern part of Knox County

AF: okay

FS: you know, that Sanctuary Community Action is for in- satellite inner church is over here in the clothing store. And it's just a neat thing that's going on. But, the families, the way they care you know for one and other and chip in, help, you know, it's neat. Some of our farms are are being taken over. Not taken over, but the Amish have moved in and I think it's nice to see that someone is still farming. You know, especially some of the smaller families.

AF: yeah

FS: and that's the whole new thing I think people have to learn to- the different lifestyles and things and I'm sure if we get the midwife thing going over here, it will be very beneficial to, to the Amish community

AF: so, do you service the Amish as well?

FS: any of the Amish can come in that wants to. Yes. We have a- here, once a month- we have Beltone comes in for hearing tests, here in this community center and the Amish- whoever, they all come in here. And I have an AA group here on Thursday nights. It's been in existence- one of my parishioners had a need for it and wanted to know if he could start it and it's been going on three or four years and we have ten, fifteen, twenty people come in here on a Thursday

AF: you get to see everybody coming out of the woodwork, huh? All these programs

FS: and a lot of the people keep going- they're good people, you know, they're all good people

AF: yeah

FS: you know, they they're just smart enough to come in and work on their difficulty. And thank God we've got somewhere for 'em.

CE: I was just curious- in our class it's come up quite a bit just discussing sort of the farmers' relationship to the land. And I was wondering how you view that and how that transcends in relation to religion and God. If you've noticed any-

FS: what do you mean

CE: well, that we've discussed about sort of the farmer being really in tune with God because they work the land and a

AF: stewardship

CE: and the very spiritual kind- and the stewardship

FS: [repeats] stewardship

CE: I was wondering what your perspective on that is in terms of the farmers and what you see as being their relationship with the church and with God, spiritually

FS: well, I think anyone that works with the things of God has gotta be close to God. And when you see animals going about you all the time and you see the miracle of birth, not only in the barn, [inaudible] in the hatching of the colts or the baby chicks or whatever it is or you see the new lamb being born I think it can a very spiritual thing for the children that grow up in that atmosphere. And I think the farmer, when he's working with the land, he, he is more respectful of the creation that God has put in charge of him. And if you go out to the farms, you'll see that they will try to take good care of their land, they will see that the right fertilizer gets on it every year and see that the right drainage is there and see that the right thing's going on so you don't waste, you know- things. And I think in that sense they are very, they are very close to God- in tune with God because anytime you take a little seed and drop it the ground and see it turn you know- think of the pascal mystery, the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. The- you know, over and over and over again. And certainly seasons tell us a hundred times you know when you see a chick come out of an egg- I don't know if you've seen all this- but if you've seen a chick pecking on an egg and suddenly it hatc- sticks it's little wet head out of there and pretty soon it has to consume the yolk and before very long it's up on it's two little scrawny legs or it you see a colt being born out here or a calf and pretty soon it's up on it's legs. You know- or a sheep, or anything. It is- it's just something special about that and I would say that from my own experience that that if you ponder over God's nature and the beauty and and even- even if you think, I think even at the times of destruction, when you get too much rain, you go down the Howard Danville Road right now and you get out here a little ways and cross the bridge and you look over in the field and you see the little kittie crickets you know- and they're pretty well dry just churning around. You know and you look at the streams right now you know and

JF: uh-huh

FS: it's all part of God's greatness I think. I think the farmers- I think what I'm trying to say it is- and you might ask them too, but I think they have a better respect for nature and we just don't go in the store and get a quart of milk you know. If you've been out there and whether you put a machine on a cow or whether you milk by hand that's you know- I don't know much- I used to- sort of play around with it at granmaw's- they even had machines back when I was growing up but more rude than they are today. But if you see something like that happen and realize that you just don't go to a store and get it in a can or one time I was, I had to with the kids down [inaudible] I begin to see that [inaudible] Catholic family moving up Columbus when I was assistant principal Ducell's High School years ago and I had a mis- in fact, I always brought the kids out to farm for picnic, well, he came up, 'guess what mommy, guess what? I just got a six pack of eggs.' A six pack of eggs. Well, guess what his dad was doing [laughs]

ALL: [laugh]

FS: but they couldn't equate it- even though you get a dozen eggs or you get six eggs- what they put it in the term of the stuff they sell in the store.

AF: how funny

FS: you know, something like that is always fascinating to these kids when you bring 'em- we used to, we don't have it right now but few years ago, we took over a softball tournament another priest started down in Vinton County and we always had Vinton County down here and McArthur come up and we had New Lexington where I used to be and we had St. Gabriel's in Columbus and St.- different parishes and St. John and these St. Gabriel's- they're all in the ghetto-like places up in Columbus and when they would come in here with their kids and they could see the stars at night and smell the fresh air, you just could see how they reacted.

AF: wow

FS: and even though he's [motions toward Jerry] from a farm area, you know it's quite different down in these hills than it is up in Van Wert? near Indiana where it's all flat. And he says they have very few animals up there.

JF: uh-huh

AF: yeah, I'm from Los Angeles so

ALL: [laugh]

AF: coming out here gave me a new appreciation for [laugh]

FS: we have a couple of- Stephanie Colopy goes out to one of the schools out in California and she just did a movie called Troubled Fields

CE: yeah

FS: about her family, her family losing losing the farm. Anyway, she's editing it now, she hasn't got it finished yet, but she spent two, three weeks filming it and the the last scenes that were here in the church

CE: really

FS: and one of the scenes is out on the corner of the farm they lost or on the property they didn't lose you know and it, it's gonna' be interesting to see it. And one of the scenes is out on the Colopy farm where they spent half the night just over and over again, loading the cows you know that they sold

AF: uh-huh

FS: onto the truck and it, it's- it was quite an experience. And the neat thing about that- she had a very limited budget and she needed help so the community got together and there wasn't a night where they didn't have a meal for about twenty people

AF: oh, wow

FS: and different parishioners, different parishioners came in here and brought food in. One of the neatest things happens here is any time we lose someone, you know a parishioner dies no matter what age, all we do is I like call up my women and they get together and we announce at church and we'll just have the tables out there filled with food and women will come in and work and we may have a hundred, hundred and fifty people here for after the funeral where the parish serves the dinner to 'em and it's just a nice- and they'll stay around and chat. A nice thing that I notice here in this community is that usually-I don't know what church you go to, whether you go to Catholic or Methodist or you know, but here after mass- you know, most of the big cities you go, they're in the parking lot, they're in the church, they're out and away they go home. But it's nothing unusual to see many families standing over the back of the church among the pews talking to their neighbors or their family members and they may talk ten, 15 minutes before they go home, you know it's just

AF: right

FS: it's just a nice, a nice getting together. And I think this is all due to the community in which we live. The sad thing is that the community doesn't have enough work- enough farms you know and not everyone is gonna' keep on farming 'cause farming is not an easy shore- you gotta know- I imagine part of our farmers around here would be college educated. I don't know whether all of 'em, but I'm sure many of 'em would be. My grandfather learned- he wasn't college educated but he was as smart as a college- you know

AF: yeah

FS: you learned it from his father and his father learned it from his father and he knew all about farming and most of my gardening I learned from both of my grandfathers. I- although I attended Ohio State in the College of Agriculture for two years before I got caught in the seminary

AF: oh really. How did that happen?

FS: I was four years- I was four years out of high school before I got to seminary but I'd always wanted to go to college and I was working at the RVM (the Essex Water Corporation's Material Hammer) and I didn't turn 18 'till after I graduated and couldn't get a job right away until October of the year I graduated. So I got on this where I worked with this-90 women of all ages and all shapes worked on this- making solenoid starter switches; now I was the stock boy. I'd put these big bins of parts up and test the solenoids and

AF: [laughs]

FS: well, it was getting- I either had to stay with the company or go with the union and that's when I decided I always wanted to go to college and since agriculture was close to my heart, I went to Ohio State in agriculture for two years. And then somehow I got over to the priesthood; never turned back.

AF: wow

FS: you know, I was in poultry science and and all that kind of stuff over at Ohio State, chemistry and bio-

AF: How did you turn to the seminary? Were you always involved with the church and then-

FS: I was in- we went to mass every Sunday. And you know and my grandparents there wasn't a night that you didn't go to their house- well, we had gone on Saturday night back when wrestling came in- you know that big time-

ALL: [laugh]

FS: wrestling that you guys- the real wrestling, not this fake stuff [laughs]

ALL: [laugh]

FS: Big Bill Miller and Todd Eagle and Professor Roychars and you don't even know- [motions toward Jerry]

JF: [laughs] no

ALL: [laugh]

FS: you weren't even born yet

JF: nope [still laughing]

FS: doubt it you were- [laughs] but anyway we'd set up there and there's granmaw and grampaw and all- suddenly the grandkids come in and watching wrestling for two, three hours- the last thing we did if we stayed over night or whether we went home- we said the Rosary. Which is a very special Catholic prayer. Always prayed, always prayed together. You know, and that's always been a neat one, you know 'the family that prays together stays together,' whether you say the Rosary or the Lord's blessing or you know, read the scripture or something. It's it's, but I'll always remember- but I just always liked the church and the things of the church and I went to a Catholic school all 12 years- Saint Mary's Lancaster and then I went to Ohio State for two years and then to the seminary and kept on going.

AF: wow. [to Jerry] How did you get involved in all this?

JF: Mostly, from Father kind of. I was involved with the [inaudible] mom is a coordinator of religious education at our parish in Van Wert and I'm from Van Wert, it's a very rural area [end side one of tape] ... so, just recently some friends said there's a job opening up in Columbus and it's up your alley and involves rural and respect life which has a lot of issues I'm doing- right now, programs for the elderly, just name a issue that the Catholic church is going for and I'm for that

AF: [laughs]

JF: I'm in that, working for that issue and so- And it's a really good opportunity to go around and see a lot of different people all over the diocese and the diocese is- it's pretty large; it goes all the way from Harden County to Siota County down in Portsmouth.

FS: twenty-three counties out of eighty-eight is in the Columbus diocese

JF: [repeats] twenty-three

AF: oh, wow

JF: I was involved with the Columbian Squires, it's the Junior Knights of Columbus, it's a Catholic organization and Father was the chaplain, the Father Prior they call it, and I worked with Father a lot as a state officer and so, I've been really tied to the church

AF: oh, wow

FS: these boys are quite fabulous. We had 30 down, 35 kids here over the weekend and the older boys, like sophomores on up were leaders for the, for the group.

JF: uh-huh

FS: We had adult supervision there and he came back and sort of to observe and he was part and his brother was back- he was a past state officer and another Brad Blubaugh, who's from here came back and you know they've been out of school a while and they're still coming back and helping with the kids

JF: uh-huh

AF: oh, that's great

FS: and we teach 'em parliamentary procedure and this was a spiritual retreat and March we're going to have a leadership and the Freedom Center is going to come over and put on part of the seminar with- where they do all kinds of exercises, you have to follow directions and the kids just loved it last year and we'll do other leadership things. Go 'head, [motions toward Jerry] tell us some more-

JF: what, what do you want to know? [laughs]

AF: well, what about the newsletter?

CE: yeah

JF: well, this is actually part of the Ohio Catholic Rural Life Conference and there- people like me, religious or not, who come together and write- right now, writing an article in *Plowshares* or they're really involved in what Father- this is what he told you- they're involved with that. And what we're trying to do is say 'hey, wait a minute, look at the rural community- you see in the cities that we're having the suburban affect, where people are moving out, moving out and why is that?' They are almost striving maybe for this type of community that Father was telling you about and so, we're just trying to let everybody know about agriculture- how it's important to your lives; if you live in a city. It's a- nope, you go, you get milk but, you- and you don't really think about the farmer or or there are other types of- not, if you're not a farmer you're still in agriculture, you're working in distribution, food distribution; we work with all that. And so, the community, the awareness and we're trying to, to spread that word out to everyone. And *Plowshares* 's just a newsletter that discusses those issues. Like the front here is- talks about the spiritual roots and rural roots, and you had a question to Father and it's one of our articles and then you might have something about policy, farm policy- that's something we deal with. So, it's

just a- Father, we're gonna' work on a maybe a rural mass or a family farm mass or some kind of agriculture day where people can come in maybe from the city, maybe from around this area and go and maybe bless the crops or just have a pot luck dinner after mass, prayer service or whatever and just build some community and that's what we're all about. So,

AF: that's great

JF: I'm pretty new to this so

FS: that's one of the reasons he came down today

JF: yeah

FS: I said 'why don't you come on the 20th 'cause I have some girls coming and

JF: [laughs]

FS: and thought maybe they'd be interested in something that you're doing'

AF: yeah, definitely

CE: uh-huh

FS: so today I took him with me- I'm on the Board of Directors of the Freedom Center Drug and Alcohol Abuse; I'm also on the Business Advisory Board for the career center education there and- but, today I took him to the Freedom Center meeting and then I took him to Country Court where I had a mass for the people over in the rest home.

JF: uh-huh

FS: and then we just got back.

JF: yeah

FS: I took him over to Sanctuary Community Action just to show him some of the things that are happening even though, even though that these places over in Mount Vernon are more concerned with a bigger place, I'm on the Board; I represent Danville, we've got someone from Fredericktown, someone from Centerburg now and so, we're representing the whole county, you know, by having different areas on this- on these different boards

AF: oh, that is great

CE: so are you finding that- you were talking about bringing about awareness in

terms of the importance of agriculture in the community

JF: uh-huh

CE: and sort of that expansion that's going on. When you say bringing about awareness, what is the intent behind that?

JF: the intent is just to show the awareness of community. Some people, a lot of people live in the city, they have sometimes- well, here's- I'll tell you this is just personally and I lived in Van Wert County where there- my next door neighbor lives about a mile away and I had almost more community in that type of a setting, where people are spread out everywhere than where I live now, in downtown, almost downtown Columbus. And I'm just seeing personally that people don't know what agriculture is and people don't- there's a lack of community I see in the inner city, or in some parts of the city. And that's just one way that we're trying to get the word out that rural means different things for different people, too. Rural is different from Danville than it is to Van Wert than it is to Sioata County. Some people aren't really into just agriculture as in- there's different forms of agriculture like Father was giving me a little tour today and I saw a lot of dairy cattle today, lot of hogs and in Van Wert County you see square fields and it's totally flat and there's corn, beans and wheat. You know, that's all you have up there. And so, we're just bringing it out that just a lot of the good values in the rural community and just trying to say 'this is good, this is a good thing, and maybe take a look at it'

FS: I think the neat thing here with this community of St. Luke's goes back to 1820. So it's been here a hundred and seventy-five years. And some of the same families, the Sapps- they've been here and the Mickleys and the Durbins and the Contleys? and the Blubaughs- I don't know how far they go back but they go back a long long ways. And we just celebrated our 175th year with the three churches out at the cemetery and the present church in here is going to be a hundred years old. We just had a fund drive- we needed 220, \$260,000 and it's over 340 some now. To renovate the church, you know. And, you know, it seems like a lot of money, but the people are community centered and they believe in their God and they want to have a nice place for God to- you know, to worship God in. And a nice part of the history. The first resident pastor here was John Baptist Leavy, who came here in 1839; he became the archbishop of Santa Fe, New Mexico and Willa Cather wrote the book, Death Comes to the Archbishop

AF: yeah

JF: huh

FS: he was right here- this wasn't here then; he was probably at the church out at the cemetery

AF: I didn't realize that

FS: yeah. And so this place has got a lot of history and it all that history is tied in with farming- George Sapp came over from Maryland on a land contract and he probably had a couple of his kids in knapsacks slung over a mule and his wife walking alongside him as they came into this territory. One old family years ago, back in the 1820s somewhere was coming across in their horse and buggy and the whole family drowned as they come across the crick. Because like today

JF: I know

FS: the water come up, upset the buggy and they all drowned. And you know, we've got quite a history, of the farm history- probably more farming back then then we have now; farms are bigger now and less- fewer.

CE: Is the community changing a lot in terms of the farm? Do you see just- is there more development going on within Danville- I'm not really familiar-

FS: we're not seeing a whole lot of building around Danville, we're seeing a lot of building in Apple Valley. You know, we see a lot, a lot of building going on over there. And we're picking- our community is changing because we're getting a lot of people in, we've got a lot of tremendous parishioners and so does St. Vincent's from Apple Valley. And there are a lot of retired people, there are some with families. We just got a new family, he got out of the service and they chose to come to St. Luke's- they live in Apple Valley and he works elsewhere. And we see an influx of some of the little farms gone to the Amish up and down 305 and or 205 and around different places- Brinkhaven, different places we see more and more of that happening but I think a lot of our people are coming in- I know I've had some people come in from New Jersey and different places and they just like this area, they like this small community, they like to settle here because it's just a lot more peaceful- not that we don't have problems and things, but we don't have the magnitude of things you have in the bigger cities.

AF: our project has found a lot of the things that you've said to, to be true; that there so much to value

FS: so we're not telling you a lie?

AF: [together] no, no

CE:

CE: I'm from New Jersey, so I agree [laugh]

ALL: [laugh]

AF: but we have this group of all kids from everywhere I would say, Boston, you

know and then some people who are from rural areas and we all look around and say, 'you know, there's a lot of worth in this.' So, that's the same thing that our project is trying to do and we're just- our effort is to, to try to document what's going on because we don't want to let you know it get away from us.

FS: I just wish I would have realized this- you know, just like what you're up to and I had you here at the mardi gras Sunday night

AF: [laughs]

FS: or sometime that you come to some of our doings, you know that we have so that you can just

AF: we'd be happy to

CE: yeah, sure

FS: oh, you know we used to have , I used to have some of the Catholic kids from Kenyon, we haven't had this for a long while, but we invited them to come over and teach religion- for two, three years- we had Tina, what was her name, she'd come over and taught senior religion and we had a couple others. The only difficulty we had with them is the times they didn't always call you up, tell you they weren't coming [laugh]

ALL: [laugh]

AF: oh, really

FS: and sometimes you'd have a whole class- or sometimes it wasn't their fault, you know, they'd have an exam come up but then that was when Father Dave Gwinner? was over there as chaplain and then when some of the others came they didn't push it as well, but we used to have two or three students involved that'd come over and teach elementary or teach high school or you know- teach a course and it was quite, it was good. We enjoyed having the Kenyon. The Jeglas- I don't know whether they teach biology or- Tom and Dorothy over at, they're teachers at Kenyon College, they're members of the parish because they wanted to be part of a parish rather than just a Kenyon parish

CE: right

FS: because they're Eucharistic ministers- here too, we try to involve the whole family like send the youth to CLC every (Catholic Leadership Conference) to training, facilitating, to lead groups and to do things and I try to get the groups involved in being eucharistic ministers and lectures, reading at masses, serving- we have both boys and girls do that and then we try to

AF: what's eucharistic?

FS: eucharistic minister is the people that are commissioned after a training- and then they're commissioned and they help with communion, they may hold the cup or they may help give out the host.

AF: okay

FS: and they're called euchari- the lectures are the readers; the ushers are the greeters or the people that welcome the people in and seat 'em or take up the money or that kind of stuff. The servers are the people that wear the robes and are up on the alter with me. See, back in 1962 the Catholic church was a non-participating church, but since Vatican council 2, it's been a very active church where we try to get the whole bunch involved in various ways and we have to constantly work at it and it's not an easy task

AF: I can imagine

FS: I know when I first started with the squires th- we had the adults doing things until about your time and since then, you guys have been doing all the work.

ALL: [laugh]

JF: yeah, that was a good part. When I went to the retreat to- this past weekend, you could see the changes how, you know, how all the kids were doing the show and you know, that's great

FS: see, all I do is impart 'em to do it and get the right people in to direct it and

AF: it works

JF: uh-huh

CE: it's a good experience, I did it in my church, too. It is a good experience.

FS: you're from New Jersey?

CE: New Jersey, uh-huh

FS: Tina and Lester Pilanner? are from New Jersey and they're dear people. they're retired and he was from Ohio originally, and she was from New Jersey and she's one of our musicians on Sunday

CE: oh, wow

FS: plays the piano, the organist

CE: is the choir made up of [inaudible] as well?

FS: we have a choir that's mainly ladies and then we have a youth choir of about 30 members from about fifth, sixth graders on up through about high school

and that's just started a year ago Easter and it's fabulous. And it's done very well. And they just sang Sunday; they was pretty good, weren't they?

JF: I wasn't here Sunday

FS: oh, you went home- yeah, sure

AF: [laughs]

JF: I do do other things

FS: oh, you ask Jason, but it was a good- and they're really interested. So, I don't know, anything else you need to know because there's lots of stuff- lots of good things happening in this community and you know, I'm not only isolated here at St. Luke's but being involved with Sanctuary Community Action, I'm a treasurer, I'm on the Board of Trustees, and I'm at Business Advisory and I'm on the Freedom Center Board so I get around

AF: right- we're trying to put together a sort of calendar of community events, but we haven't decided whether we are going to focus on a month or a week or a year or what's going to happen exactly, but is there any sort of timeline of like, I don't know- five, ten, whatever- however many things are-happen annually that are just of like paramount importance?

CE: Would you actually have a calendar of events that's printed up?

FS: what's that?

CE: do you have a calendar of events that you print?

FS: we put a calendar of events out every month

AF: oh, do you?

FS: for the parish- so basically, it's what's happening here at St. Luke's

CE: right

AF: do you think we could see one of them? Like maybe one month or something-

FS: yeah

AF: we could always, we could always photo copy and bring back to you- all your stuff

FS: no, we've got extra- I've just gotta figure out whether I've got one here or we need to go to the office and get one

CE: [laughs]

AF: okay

FS: I'm involved in so much stuff that when I get out one program I don't get it put back and that's why you see stuff all over the office

AF: I, I have a feeling that we're gonna' go home and come up with a million questions to ask you about different things [laughs]

CE: I was, I was just curious- you know being from New Jersey I noticed that in our parish that a lot of times you'll have a majority of the members show up around Christmas and Easter and I don't know if that's partly out of guilt- you know, come on the major holidays- I'm not really- I'm just trying to get a feel for the parish here and the commitment and the dedication that goes on, I mean do you really find that the people come every Sunday and is there a serious-

FS: I think we get a good percentage of people to come on Sunday, but we- like anywhere else, they may decide to come this Sunday, they may not and they don't feel guilty like they used to a long time ago

AF: [laughs]

CE: [laughs]

FS: and if they come this Sunday, fine. But- and I think we have more of our youth coming at the moment now, although it's hard to get a read out on that because you don't know how many- you know that there's a lot of 'em away to college and that kind of stuff. But, we have our Christmas Catholics and we have our Easter Catholics and so if we put out our- if we had had poinsettias there more often and Easter lilies

ALL: [laugh]

FS: then they'd feel more at home. But we have a good bunch that's faithful all the time. And this day and age with families so spread out, it's nothing that you may be in Columbus for mass this weekend because your grandson is having his first communion or someone's doing this, so you don't always have 'em home at the parish celebrations. Tomorrow night, tomorrow at eleven, it won't be as large a crowd, but tomorrow night the church will be a pretty good size for Ash Wednesday. It's not a holy day but it's something people come to get the ashes and we have a good crowd for that

CE: I was trying to gauge, get an idea of the difference

FS: so I don't know exactly how to answer you, but I'd say we've got a number of people that would definitely- you see people at Christmas time you haven't

seen all year but sometimes it's hard to know- you can't say some of yours aren't coming because they may be- like we got some families down from Cleveland and they always go home for Christmas, you know and a lot of people do that if they're from elsewhere and if they've come here because of work because they're at Cooper's or Kelsey-Hayes or Ariel or some of these places they may go home- no matter where it is.

AF: right

FS: and then you may not have 'em. And then some other children won't be in their parishes because they'll be coming here. And you- we get a lot of visitors here because of the tourists and you know all of the rivers and all the resorts around here, you know- you get people. And there are some of 'em that comes to Apple Valley every summer- they end up, they either go here or St. Vincent's. you know.

CE: but it's pretty steady

FS: it's pretty steady. we're not real large here- 'bout a thousand people, 'bout four hundred fifty, sixty and we don't always have that big a crowd every weekend. The weather has a lot to do with it. You know this past weekend, we had some bad weather and it was a nice crowd out for Saturday night and 8 o'clock was kinda' shy and then 10 o'clock- well, we had all these extra people so it looked like it was big

ALL: [laugh]

FS: but we probably have- our Latin- our October count was probably four hundred sixty people at mass- at all three masses, which isn't too bad

CE: I know at our parish it's kind of- it's usually steady, but very small and then come Christmas and Easter the parking lot's full and

FS: yeah

CE: and it's hard to find a seat and so, you know- it's a real large discrepancy in terms of-

FS: well, I know like a couple years ago- a year ago, we had around 500 at childrens' mass just on the vigil; last year we probably had 480; midnight we probably had 380 and then Christmas day we had 150. Well, you add up 480 and 380 and 150 and that's way more than 460

CE: [laughs]

FS: so, you know, so- I think that's true of most places, although like I say, you cannot say 'cause some of 'em may be out elsewhere with their families

elsewhere and we know there are a certain amount of people out there that don't come to church and all at once they'll start in again- and so, you just have to keep reaching out. Catholics- other churches have a whole program on evangelization, reaching out. You got to reach out to the unchurched, you got to reach out to the church

AF: [laughs]

FS: you know, you've just gotta keep doing things for these people and you never know when sometimes marriages in the Catholic church- if they haven't been married sometimes takes 'em away because they haven't done it the way that they know they're supposed to and they've got the old guilt trip and sometimes divorce will keep 'em away and all at once- the right person or right thing moves in and back they come

AF: right

FS: and you just gotta be there. you know, when they're there. take 'em the way they are- they gotta take you the way you are

ALL: [laugh]

CE: so it sounds like you find it extremely rewarding

FS: it's very rewarding- it's a- I've been a priest now 30, I think I'll be 30 plus years- I think that's how long and I didn't get started right away but I've never regretted a day of it and there's never a day that's quite the same you know

AF: that's wonderful

FS: there's constantly something neat going on and it's not and sometimes it's filled with problems- sometimes you get people that you just wish you knew the answers, but basically, all you can do is be there for them- be out among 'em. I'm not an office person, I like to be out moving around-

AF: [laughs] sounds like you do a lot of it.

CE: definitely

AF: all your organizations- well, thank you so much for your time

CE: yeah, thank you; you covered a lot of our bases so

FS: well, if you need anything else or you need to come back, you're most welcome- just let me know.

AF: well thank you

CE: thank you very much

AF: thanks to you, too Jerry

end of interview

of transcript

end